



GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

Guidance for Safely Reopening GVRA

Reopening Plan

GVRA will begin to transition to normal business operations on June 15, utilizing a phased approach, as outlined below.

Phase 1

- All staff who are authorized by their manager or other program leadership to telework should continue to do so on a staggered telework schedule. Program Directors are charged with ensuring adequate office coverage is maintained and services are not interrupted. Program Directors should discontinue telework schedules if productivity drops.
- Program Directors should consider staggered or alternative work schedules for employees who are required to work on-site, if possible.
- Minimize staff presence as much as possible while providing essential coverage. For example, managers should target no more than 50 percent of employees in each department (i.e. local offices, or in administration, functional areas like Human Resources, External Affairs, Fiscal, etc.) physically present each day.
- When possible, staff meetings should be conducted via remote technology i.e. Microsoft Teams. In person meetings should be avoided unless absolutely necessary and proper precautions are possible.
- Staff travel is limited to essential agency functions.
- The Agency will provide employees who work on-site with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the extent possible and workplace safety guidelines.

Phase 2

- All staff who are authorized to telework by their manager or other program leadership should continue staggered telework schedules, transitioning to more in-office days versus telework days. Program Directors should consider productivity and impact to customer service when determining staggered telework schedules.



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- Employees who are required to work on-site may begin to transition to normal business schedules if staggered or alternative work schedules were previously approved. Program Directors should ensure that appropriate social distancing measures are followed.
- When possible, staff meetings should be conducted via remote technology i.e. Microsoft Teams. In-person meetings should allow for proper social distancing.
- Staff travel remains limited to essential agency functions.
- The Agency will continue to provide employees who work on-site with appropriate PPE and workplace safety guidelines.

Phase 3

- All employees resume on-site work schedules.
- Restrictions on staff travel are lifted, staff travel resumes upon approval of program based on budgetary considerations.
- The Agency will evaluate the continued need to provide employees with PPE as recommended by public health experts.

GVRA will regularly evaluate the efficacy of our precautionary measures using guidance from the Office of the Governor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). When state agencies are directed to transition to a new phase, we will relay updates through our usual communications channels.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will GVRA allow parents without child care options due to COVID-19 to telework?

Consistent telework schedules will be considered for parents without child care options until such options become available. Managers should conduct a review, at a minimum, every 30 days, to reevaluate the employee's continued need for a consistent telework schedule. Managers should maintain an up-to-date list of employees on a



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consistent telework schedule due to child care issues and should provide updates to Human Resources (HR) every 30 days regarding the employees' status.

Will the agency allow medically fragile employees to telework?

During Phase 1 and Phase 2 re-entry, managers and supervisors should take a liberal approach with allowing telework options for employees with known/visible medical issues or disabilities. Ongoing concerns will be addressed individually. Managers and supervisors should consult with HR regarding the need to request medical documentation from employees without known/visible disabilities or medical issues to support a request for a consistent telework schedule or other accommodation. Each situation should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with the manager consulting with their Program Director and HR for guidance and to ensure consistency.

Will the agency limit access to public areas like lobbies, break rooms, etc.?

During Phase 1 and Phase 2 of re-entry, access to lobbies and common areas should be limited. As the CDC recommends wearing face coverings when in public settings during this time, non-employees should be required to wear CDC recommended face coverings when in the office (CDC's guidance on face coverings attached.). Areas accessible to the public should be sanitized daily. In lobbies, staff should add highly visible markings on the floor to ensure social distancing. For example, a marking six feet from the front desk/receptionist should note where visitors should stand.

Only one staff member at a time should be permitted in a break area for the purpose of food storage and preparation only. Employees (including non-exempt employees) should be allowed and encouraged to eat lunch at their desks/work stations to prevent unnecessary gatherings. Managers are responsible for enforcing these guidelines.

Employees should wear CDC recommended face coverings in all common areas and/or whenever they leave their personal work space/station/area, including for trips to the restroom and travel between floors (if applicable). For larger, multi-floor offices, travel between floors should be restricted to a few designated employees and only when absolutely necessary.



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Will the agency approve telework or leave for employees who want to continue to shelter-in-place out of an “abundance of caution”?

Managers are to continue to encourage telework and should implement a staggered telework schedule or rotation for those employees who are able to fulfill the essential functions of their job remotely and demonstrate consistent productivity. **However, unless the employee has a known/visible disability or medical condition or a medical condition supported by medical documentation, leave options will not continue.** Based on GVRA-wide telework instructions, managers should set an expectation of a return to work date or a date for such employees to return to a staggered telework model.

GVRA will regularly reevaluate the efficacy of precautionary measures. Guidance from the Office of the Governor, Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) will serve as key considerations.

Will the agency limit face-to-face contact with clients when possible?

The CDC recommends social distancing and limiting face-to-face contact with others as the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is for that reason options for teleconferencing or phone meetings are preferred. Where such alternatives are not available, staff should follow the below mandatory guidelines:

1. Prior to scheduling a face-to-face meeting, employees should inquire about the Client's health status using the questions provided as a separate attachment.
2. Both the employee and client are required to wear CDC-recommended face coverings during the meeting. Staff should advise clients of this expectation when scheduling the appointment. Employees may decline a face-to-face meeting if a client is not appropriately protecting their face with a covering.
3. Local managers should identify one area within the office where all face-to-face meetings with clients will be conducted. These areas should have clear social distancing markings and should be sanitized after each meeting and before the next, as well as nightly.



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4. Clients may be seen by appointment only. Walk-ins are prohibited until further notice.
5. The client should be instructed to call the employee upon arrival, and if possible, to remain in the vehicle until the employee asks them to enter. (Other arrangements should be made for those who arrive by public transportation or ride-sharing services.) Unless assistance is necessary or a guardian must be present, the client should not bring additional attendees.
6. Office restrooms should be closed to the public.

Will GVRA provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes?

The agency is making arrangements to provide PPE and cleaning supplies to each location to the extent that such supplies are available.

How will the GVRA handle COVID-19 illnesses or exposure of employees?

The agency is following the guidelines and recommendations from the CDC and DPH when addressing COVID-19 illness or exposure of employees and their immediate household members as it relates to the circumstances described below:

1. The employee has symptoms of the virus and is awaiting diagnosis, has a positive diagnosis, or has been advised by a healthcare official to quarantine because of exposure.
2. The employee's household member (spouse, child, roommate, etc.) has been diagnosed with the illness, has been advised to quarantine by a healthcare official because of exposure or symptoms, or has been tested and is awaiting a diagnosis.

Employees and their supervisors should follow the below protocol when a situation meets the criteria described above:

1. The employee should notify their immediate supervisor as soon as possible.
2. The immediate supervisor must immediately notify their Program Director and the Human Resources (HR) Director.



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3. The HR Director will work with the supervisor and Program Director to identify all co-workers who were in **close** contact (as defined by the CDC/DPH) with the affected employee. Communications plans will be developed as necessary.
4. The office/work area will be closed to evaluate the appropriate deep-cleaning and sanitization requirements per CDC guidelines and recommendations. Employees affected by the closure should be instructed to telework (if possible)
5. The affected employee can return to work upon presentation of medical clearance from a physician
6. Co-workers who chose to self-quarantine without medical guidance to do so should be given the option to telework (if possible) or will be granted annual leave, personal leave, comp time or LWOP for no more than 14 days. Co-workers who quarantine based on a recommendation to do so by a health care official should be allowed to telework (if possible). Employees unable to telework should consult with HR regarding available options.

Will offices be cleaned on a regular basis?

The Office of Property and Facilities is taking several measures to enhance safety and health in response to COVID-19 by increasing the frequency of cleaning services. Cleaning and disinfecting services will be conducted weekly and are handled through independent contractors. The CDC recommends spraying non-electronic surfaces with diluted household bleach or cleaning liquids with at least 70% alcohol. Therefore, we have reached out to contractors across the state that can provide such services. The need for extra cleaning and disinfecting services will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to assess risk in accordance with CDC guidance.

Most GVRA leases have provisions outlining standardized janitorial requirements. The landlord is responsible for routine daily cleaning of the space in accordance with the terms of the lease.

Staff should also take proper care to reduce the spread of illness by cleaning electronics, including laptops, keyboards and mobile devices, in accordance with appropriate methods (guidance on cleaning hardware included as separate attachment).



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Please use only proper cleaning methods to sanitize equipment, and do not expose your machines to harsh chemicals like bleach.

How will GVRA handle employees with unplanned absences due to personal illness?

Unplanned sick leave absences (“call-outs”) may require medical release before the employee is allowed to return to work. Managers should inquire about the employee’s health status using the questions HR has provided as a separate attachment. As a reminder, medical documentation should be submitted to HR and not maintained locally. Additionally, any health related information obtained as a result of this inquiry must be kept confidential. Managers are not authorized to ask specific questions about an employee’s medical condition other than those provided in the HR document attached.

How will GVRA handle sick employees who report to work?

Managers must consistently advise employees they are not to report to work if they are sick and should post signage (provided as a separate attachment) to help address staff illness. The agency reserves the right to refuse entry to the work place for employees who are sick or displaying symptoms of any illness. **Managers and supervisors should contact HR for guidance before confronting an employee suspected of being ill. Coworkers should not confront peers they believe to be sick and should instead consult with a manager or supervisor.**

Employees should be moved to a private, isolated area and asked specific questions (see attached health screening questionnaire) as recommended by the guidelines released. Employees who answer ‘yes’ to questions on the health screening questionnaire should be required to immediately leave the workplace. They should not be allowed to return to their desk/work station to collect personal belongings. The manager or supervisor, wearing PPE at all times, should collect employees’ personal belongings while the employee waits in the private/isolated area. The manager or supervisor should walk with the employee to their vehicle at an appropriate social distance to ensure the employee does not enter other areas of the workplace.



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The employee should be instructed not to return to the workplace until they have submitted documentation from a healthcare official authorizing them to do so.

After the employee leaves the work place, the employee's work area should be cleaned and sanitized based on CDC recommendations and guidance. Based on current CDC and DPH guidance, GVRA may consider closure of the office until the employee's work area/station and entire office can be cleaned and sanitized. If the office is closed, all employees affected by the closure should be required to telework, if possible.

Will GVRA continue suspension of in-person staff meetings?

Programs should suspend all internal in-person meetings, if possible. Beginning in Phase 2, meetings between people who work on the same floor, office or area could be permissible, but only if the meeting is held in a space large enough to accommodate the minimum six-foot social distancing requirements. Employees must wear CDC recommended face coverings for face-to-face meetings.